



Domestic Violence Awareness Campaigns & Major Cultural and Sporting Events

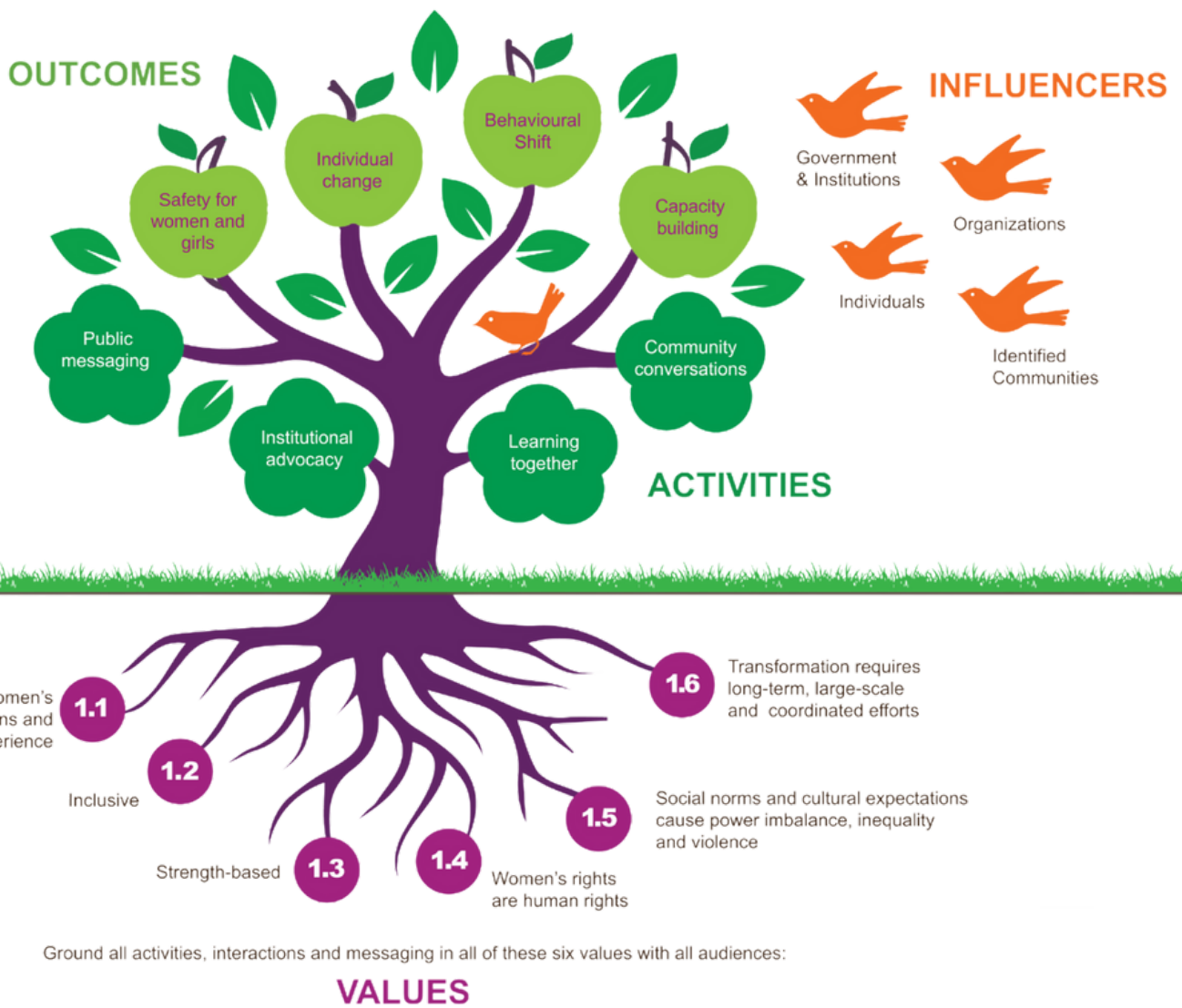


Context

Several countries have conducted research that found a strong relationship between domestic violence and sporting, cultural, and special events. For instance, one study in Glasgow, Scotland found a 36% increase in domestic violence calls during the Premier League season over a period of eight years. A more recent study based out of Manchester, England revealed that domestic violence gradually increases over a 10-hour period after football games.

Closer to home, a 2017 study found that over a period of four years, domestic violence calls to police and helplines in Calgary, Alberta increased by 40% during the Grey Cup. Altogether, domestic violence scholars have found that there are several major risk factors that lead to an increase of gender-based violence during and after major sporting and entertainment events including unhealthy forms of masculinity and power imbalances, a surge in testosterone levels, liquor consumption, and heightened adrenalin levels. Subsequently, these factors may prompt violent and aggressive behaviour.

Understanding these links and building on our Leading Change™ Inspired Communities Model, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) undertook a significant primary prevention campaign during the back-to-back Grey Cup finals recently held in Alberta in 2018 and 2019.



Leading Change™ is the ACWS Call to Action which asks each and every one of us to consider what we can do to prevent and end violence against women and girls. This work is guided by the Leading Change™ Inspired Communities Model (above). Using the tree metaphor, the Model describes how change is possible by rooting the work in feminist values, taking on a breadth of intentional activities, and working with key influencers to achieve outcomes that improve safety for women and girls in Alberta. The model builds on a strengths-based approach, encouraging focus on what can be done and seeking new opportunities to engage that will have far-reaching and long-lasting effects.

Our Work

Aligning with the Grey Cup finals in Edmonton and Calgary, ACWS undertook a gender-based violence prevention and awareness campaign during November in 2018 and 2019. Based on research into the connections between major sporting and entertainment events, we saw an incredible opportunity to affect change in Alberta's two biggest cities. The campaigns included public education and awareness events, focused messaging on the risks of violence during and after major sporting events, and more.

Our work would not have been possible without the partnership and support of the Canadian Football League (CFL) and funding from the Government of Canada through the Department of Women and Gender Equality.



Take Action

Based on our experiences, we have collated this guide for women's organizations to use in planning prevention campaigns during and in partnership with major sporting and entertainment events in their cities. Whether it is the playoffs, an awards show, a major sporting event, a festival, or another high profile event that brings the attention and focus of many, campaign activities provide opportunities to combat gender-based violence by widely sharing prevention messaging and leading change. The events will vary widely and every organization knows its local context best. What follows are the major components and opportunities we recommend exploring when considering a prevention campaign of this kind.



Key Components

of Successful Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Awareness Campaigns in Alignment with Major Events:



Engage Early

Partnerships can make or break your event

- Establish strong working relationships with community organizations linked to at-risk populations.
- Complete organizational capacity self-assessments prior to the sporting or entertainment event and fill gaps where you and your colleagues can to ensure supports are available to complete the campaign and to support survivors during and after the event.
- Create relationships with sporting associations, players, the hospitality industry, and the public.
- Leverage and foster partnerships with police services, city officials, provincial government & health service providers.
- Ensure you obtain buy-in from as many willing partners as you can to have the widest reach and scope for your campaign.

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Foster Partnerships

Get in where it counts most

- Local women's organizations are encouraged to advocate with the hosts of major events – the CFL, the National Hockey League (NHL), the organization behind the scenes making the event come to life. These groups have the most influence in determining what will and won't have focus during the event.
 - To execute this, advocate with your municipal and provincial leaders to make working with local women's organizations to address gender-based violence part of their financial packages and agreements to host the event in your community.
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Get Together

Inclusion leads to better engagement

- Connect with diverse partners to coordinate an event planning committee.
- Develop partnerships among sporting groups, restaurants and bars, hotels, and anti-violence organizations, and appoint a public spokesperson for increased effectiveness.
- Seek out a media partner willing to donate or provide discounted rates for promotions as part of their corporate responsibility.

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Know your Audience

How will you reach them?

- Consider where in your city individuals are likely to go during the event and focus your public messaging and events in those places.
 - For example, if the event is focused on activities at an arena or central place, connect with neighbouring businesses to amplify your message.
 - If the event is more spread out across the city, seek a media partner that can support billboards on traffic routes between locations.
 - Determine if the event has affiliated hotels and work with them to include a small flyer in a room key folder or signage in their hotel restaurant.
 - Explore opportunities to provide training to hospitality staff in the area.
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Find the Funds

Encourage organizers to make an investment

- Apply for funding well in advance of the event.
- Work with your municipal, provincial, and federal leaders to ensure that their event support is contingent on the event host's commitment (fiscal and social) to supporting a prevention campaign.
- Seek corporate sponsors. Sometimes sponsors of the main event can share space and advertising (e.g. sharing booth space, distributing awareness materials, etc.) with a local not-for-profit organization
- Be sure to allocate adequate funds for marketing, television ads & social media engagement (costs vary by market).

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Spread the Word

Communicate early; communicate often

- Consider your messaging – attendees should be able to quickly understand the issue and how they can lead from where they stand.
- Efforts are most effective when they are grounded in the voices of women who have experienced violence and the organizations that support them. Leveraging your experience, knowledge, and networks, center women’s voices in the campaign.
- People experiencing violence should be able to easily remember contact information for supports.
- Create posters with information about domestic violence, sexual assault, and support resources for help in public spaces visitors frequent.
- If funds permit, create swag with campaign messaging to everyone at the event gate and have announcers make a statement on domestic violence with recognition of the local organization(s) involved.
- Develop promotional marketing materials including posters, handouts, billboards, television, and social media ads.





Get Everyone Ready

Support widespread bystander presence

- Provide all event facility staff and volunteers with Bystander Intervention and First Responder Training for domestic violence and sexual assault. Explore options to train nearby hospitality staff in similar sessions.



Be Creative

Capture attention in new ways

- Explore how the event can support new and engaging ways to share your message and support Bystander Intervention,
- Major events often have associated multi-day festivals. Explore how you can be present at those festivals and activities that might capture the attention of folks passing by.
- Involve artists, performers, athletes, and local leaders in amplifying your message.



Support Survivors

Be ready to help

- Build up a network of safety with organizations including not-for-profits, municipal and provincial governments, and health services.
- Work together to identify and address the necessary supports that will be needed during the event.
- Through your communications strategy and activities, provide easy to remember information to navigate people experiencing violence toward help.



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Think Outside the Box

Consider different ways to address challenges that may come up

- The event is the reason why everyone is there. This is the primary focus of the organizer's planning and promotions, which may limit the reach of your messaging in comparison. Having a variety of partnerships to help spread the word will help bring your message to the widest possible audience.
- Be willing to go it alone. While there are numerous strategic advantages to partnering with the event organizers, there can also be limitations. Consider the most effective way to get your messaging to your audience and be willing to explore different options of achieving your intended outcome(s).

Major sporting and entertainment events may bring an upswing in violence, but they also bring the eyes of the country to your city. We encourage you to take the opportunity to showcase your amazing work, highlight the issue, and engage with a wide variety of stakeholders to join you in making a difference in your community. New and unique local relationships can be seeded by working with non-traditional partners at major events, widening your reach.

Together, we can end violence. It's time to take action and lead change.



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